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DONOVAN, ABEL'S LAWYER, KEY FACTOR

Behind Spy Swap

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Now it can be told.

The "Big Swap" yesterday of U-2 pilot Gary Powers for Russian spy Rudolf Abel climaxed negotiations replete with foreign intrigue.

The key man was silver-haired attorney James Britt Donovan, born in the Bronx and seasoned by service as a Navy underwater demolition squadman, general counsel of the OSS and prosecutor of Nazi war criminals. Last year he became vice president of the New York Board of Education.

Col. Abel, sentenced to 30 years in prison in 1957, escaped execution only because of Donovan's masterful eloquence as his court-appointed defense attorney.

Spare Abel, pleaded Donovan, so that the spy master might be exchanged some day for Americans imprisoned by the Soviets.

DEFENDING ABEL had not been easy. Donovan was appointed on recommendation of the Bar

But his children became targets for taunts in school and he had to cut off his phone service because of crank calls. He donated his \$10,000 fee to Harvard, Columbia and Fordham Universities.

Then came the U-2 incident in May, 1960. Donovan suggested to his wife, Mary, that it might be a "good idea" for the U. S. to swap Powers for Abel.

Late in 1960, Abel's wife wrote from East Berlin, urging Donovan to try to obtain clemency for her husband. The Justice Department recommended Mrs. Abel address her plea to President Kennedy after he took office.

Later, the plea was rejected. Further letters were exchanged between Mrs. Abel and Donovan, who kept Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy informed of the clicking.

SIX WEEKS AGO, a chance for "negotiations" with the Reds developed. Donovan was au-

thorized to go to East Germany to explore the situation.

Not even Donovan's wife knew his destination. He told her he was going to Scotland on "insurance business."

He conducted the delicate negotiations in utmost secrecy. The U.S. also proposed freedom for student Frederick L. Pryor.

When it appeared Donovan's efforts were near success, President Kennedy signed an order freeing Abel once the Soviets agreed to liberate the Americans.